Limitations on Using the Nationwide Readmissions Database (NRD)

Consider Each Year of the NRD as a Separate Sample

The patient linkage numbers (NRD_VisitLink) do not track the same patient across years of the NRD. Additionally, the hospital identifiers (HOSP_NRD) do not track the sampled hospitals across years of the NRD. Users should consider each year of the NRD as a separate sample.

Use Caution When Studying Readmissions for Patients Age 0

Information on patients aged 0 years is limited in the NRD because the patient linkage numbers for this age group are not reported in all SID used for the NRD. Records for patients aged 0 years are excluded from the NRD from more than half of the SID in 2010–2013 NRD, from 10 of the 22 SID in 2014 NRD, and from 13 of the 27 SID in the 2015 NRD. The weights for these discharges were often much higher than other discharges. For example in the 2010 NRD, the weights on discharges for patients aged 0 years range from 1 to 247, with an average weight of 19. In contrast, the weights for all other discharges in the 2010 NRD range from 1.0 to 27.6, with an average weight of 3. The range of discharge weights by age and sex are provided for each data year in the *Introduction to the NRD* under Appendix A, Table A.5.

Use KEY_NRD to Link NRD Files within a Data Year, Not Patients

KEY_NRD contains a unique record identifier for the discharge, not a patient linkage number. The NRD unique record identifier (data element KEY_NRD) can be used to add data elements from the Severity and Diagnosis/Procedure Groups files to the records on the Core file within the same data year. The values of KEY_NRD are different in each data year 2010–2012 and 2015, but are nonunique between 2013 and 2014.